



# BEYOND THE EXHIBITS

## North Carolina Museum of History

### North Carolina and the American Revolution

North Carolina was the first colony to ask its representatives at the Second Continental Congress to vote for “independency” three months before the Declaration of Independence. How did the North Carolinians of the time choose to join the cause for liberty? And did liberty really mean freedom for all? Explore the battles fought here, big and small, and understand their significance. Learn about life for the people living in North Carolina during revolutionary times and the choices they faced, within families and communities, as well as the contributions they made to the causes in which they believed.

In this educational packet:

- Read “Transitions” information excerpt from the Colonial and American Revolution History-In-a-Box kit.
- Try a writing prompt and explain what you think would have happened had the Albany Plan of Union succeeded.
- Review “Toward Revolution” information excerpt from the Colonial and American Revolution History-In-a-Box kit.
- Watch [Artifact Chit-Chat](#) and discover the history of North Carolina and the American Revolution with artifacts that were actually there!
- Now that you’ve read all about the Edenton Tea Party, have your own—complete with Shrewsbury Cakes!
- Read “A Place at War” information excerpt from the Colonial and American Revolution History-In-a-Box kit.
- Watch [Friends in Liberty: North Carolina in the American Revolution](#) which tells the story of 14-year-old High McDonald and his friend, Anne Taylor, during the Revolutionary War. The film is based on McDonald’s actual journal and describes his experiences with the Continental Army.
- Design your own newspaper front page based on events in your town or county from the Revolution!

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### Transitions

#### How is a colony governed, anyway?

Great question! North Carolina became a royal colony in 1729, as King George II bought the interest of seven of the eight Lord Proprietors. While the Crown ruled the whole colony, Lord Granville maintained some claim to his district, a 60-mile-wide strip across the northern portion of the colony. Granville continued to have economic control and granted land, but this separate province within the colony added to the confusion in government. With the appointment of a royal governor and the use of permanent fixed salaries for judges and some appointed officials, the Crown attempted to assert a stronger measure of control and influence, not just in North Carolina, but across the colonies. The Crown desired to create an economic and political dependence that would strengthen the English government and help make England more self-sufficient. Greater control over its colonies' resources meant that England was not as dependent on other countries for raw materials needed for economic growth. In North Carolina, the governor represented the interests of the Crown, while the elected Assembly continued to be a force for the interests of the landowners; often these two sets of interests were not aligned. North Carolina's Assembly, formed way back in 1677 after Culpepper's War, had gained power over the years, while governors generally had little power throughout the colonial period. Local courts were where most settlers experienced governmental services. North Carolina colonists knew and relied upon local court and county officials, while many thought high-level government officials to be corrupt.

#### Was North Carolina friendly with the other colonies?

Of course, North Carolinians traded, traveled, and knew people in other colonies. Officially, however, North Carolina colonial representatives tended to stay home. In 1754 the British government called for a conference to be held at Albany, New York. Representatives from each colony were expected to attend. Their hope was to complete a treaty with the Iroquois nation that would be respected throughout the colonies and also to secure support in England's war with France. The colonists wanted a strong defense against growing attacks from American Indians who were trying to maintain their ancestral lands. North Carolina, along with five other colonies, was not represented at this conference.

#### What happened at the Albany Conference?

One thing that did not happen was a union of the colonies. Benjamin Franklin, of Pennsylvania, attended the conference and was a leading figure in an effort to create a "Plan of Union" for the colonies. He and other colonists, as well as officials in England, saw a union as a way to more easily govern and to have a joint say in common interests. At the conference, a "Plan of Union" was proposed, debated, and passed and sent to each colony for consideration.

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### The colonies could have united?

Yes, but not as the United States. Most colonial legislatures did not want to give up any power or authority to a centralized government. We can only imagine how events might have gone if that union had occurred. It is easy to see in the Albany Plan of Union the seeds of ideas that would be revisited in years to come, including separation of powers, union of North American colonies separate from other British colonies, and strength in union. North Carolina Royal Governor Arthur Dobbs presented the Plan of Union to the Assembly, who did not give it serious consideration.

### Arthur Dobbs, who?

Arthur Dobbs was the sixth of nine royal governors of North Carolina. He was governor from 1753–1763. Of course, North Carolina had many other governors before these royal governors. Whether it was Virginia, Carolana, Carolina, or North Carolina, different people had been appointed or, in some cases, become, governor of this land. Some 31 men had been called governor between 1585 and 1729. Some governors were more effective than others—some never were here at all! At times the president of the council or the speaker of the Assembly acted as governor. Listed below are the governors of North Carolina during the colonial period of its history. There are overlaps in years as occasional disputes, travel delays, and other issues made it hard to say exactly who governed when.

#### Governors of colonial North Carolina:

- For the original “Virginia” Colony at Roanoke: Ralph Lane, 1585–1586, and John White, 1587.
- Decades later, when the population grew in the Virginia colony (which included this land), there was a governor for “Old Virginia” or the Southern Plantation, distinguishing it from the Chesapeake Bay area of the colony: Samuel Stephens, 1662–1664.
- Governors under the Lords Proprietors:
  - William Drummond, 1664–1667
  - Samuel Stephens, 1667–1669
  - Peter Carteret, 1670–1672
  - John Jenkins, 1672–1675
  - Thomas Eastchurch, 1675–1676
  - John Jenkins, 1676–1677
  - Thomas Miller, 1677
  - John Harvey, 1679
  - Henry Wilkinson, 1680
  - John Jenkins, 1680–1681
  - Seth Sothel, 1682–1689
  - John Archdale, 1683–1686
  - John Gibbs, 1689–1690
  - Thomas Jarvis, 1690–1694
  - Philip Ludwell, 1690–1691, 1692–1693, 1693–1695
  - Thomas Harvey, 1694–1699
  - John Archdale, 1695–1696
  - Henderson Walker, 1699–1703
  - Robert Daniel, 1703–1705
  - Thomas Cary, 1705–1711

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- William Glover, 1706-1710
- Edward Hyde, 1711-1712
- Thomas Pollock, 1712-1714
- Charles Eden, 1714-1722
- Thomas Pollock, 1722
- William Reed, 1722-1724
- George Burrington, 1724-1725
- Richard Everard, 1725-1731
- These men were royal governors; appointed by the Crown in England:
  - George Burrington, 1731-1734
  - Nathaniel Rice, 1734
  - Gabriel Johnston, 1734-1752
  - Nathaniel Rice, 1752-1753
  - Matthew Rowan, 1753-1754
  - Arthur Dobbs, 1753-1763
  - William Tryon, 1765-1771
  - James Hasell, 1771
  - Josiah Martin, 1771-1775

### How did the Assembly work?

Generally, in North Carolina, the elected Assembly represented the interests and rights of the people—in contrast to the governor who represented the interests of either the “owners” or the Crown. The governor’s right to rule was given in the charter to the Lord Proprietors or was inherent in the Crown. This division of interest led governors and assemblies to try to take advantage of the other. For example, as there was no fixed place for the government to meet, the governor could call for an Assembly meeting in a place inconvenient for those members in opposition to a particular policy. There existed regional differences—a north-south rivalry between the Albemarle region and the Cape Fear areas, and a more distinct difference in a newer rivalry between east and west in the colony.

The Assembly consisted of an upper and lower house. The upper house was called the council and was appointed by the governor, the Crown, or proprietors. This council also served to advise the governor, separate from the Assembly. The president of the Council served in the governor’s place if the governor and deputy governor were ill or not present. The lower house was made up of men elected from the various precincts (later called counties) by eligible voters. Older counties were allowed to elect five members to the General Assembly, while newer counties (those formed after 1696) were allowed two members. Some towns were also allowed to elect a representative. The General Assembly as a whole elected its leader, the speaker.

The tension between the governor and the General Assembly rested on issues of money. The Assembly had the privilege of spending gathered taxes and deciding the governor’s salary. The General Assembly could be called into session only by the governor, but because of the General Assembly’s power of the purse strings, it was called into session regularly. Because representation

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in the powerful General Assembly was based on counties, formation of new counties was also a point of contention between the two bases of power. On occasion, the governor and council created counties whose elected representatives were denied seats in the Assembly until proper legislative action could be taken.

### East/West colony rivalry? Like football?

Not exactly. Remember all those settlers moving into the backcountry, the Piedmont? The counties created for this part of North Carolina tended to be quite large geographically, yet they still had only two elected members in the General Assembly. Meanwhile, counties in the east—the older counties—usually were much smaller in size but had two or even five representatives. And it wasn't long before the population of the backcountry exceeded that of the eastern counties, too. It's easier to understand if we look at how the counties formed.

There were five precincts in 1700 and 11 precincts in 1729; by 1740 there were only 13. By 1760 there were 27 counties (precincts). While maps show North Carolina's current western border, in the 1700s no real western boundary existed; western counties had no western boundary either. And while some eastern counties were larger than today, they still were smaller than the western counties, meaning more representation in the General Assembly.

Each county, then, like those today, had its own government, centralized at a town called the county seat. At the county seat, courts were held, deeds and wills were registered, and other legal business accomplished. In large backcountry counties, travel on foot or by horse to the county seat was a slow, time-consuming process. Backcountry residents resented these inconveniences as well as a lack of fair representation in the Assembly. Piedmont population was growing, but representation was not. Large counties meant fewer representatives. Eastern county representatives were not eager to create new counties that would dilute the power they had in the Assembly. In the 1760s, people in the backcountry began to protest these inequities, writing and signing petitions, and refusing to pay certain taxes that they believed to be unfair. They were also worried about the war that threatened them from the west, from the frontier.

### War from the frontier? The American Revolution?

Yes, the frontier, and no, not the Revolution. Many settlers in the diverse colony of North Carolina united against a common threat during the French and Indian War (1754-1763), which preceded the American Revolution. The French and Indian War, or the Seven Years War (although it lasted longer than seven years), was a war between France and England, and eventually Spain. It would be fought on three continents and have far-reaching consequences for these countries and for the continent of North America. Both the English and French sought American Indian allies to bolster their positions. Of course, American Indians considered their own positions and weighed which allegiance would benefit their tribes, as they had no real loyalties to governments far overseas. Remaining neutral was not much of an option for the tribes in the colonies. Many American Indians distrusted the English colonists, who encroached upon their lands, while some distrusted how French traders claimed power in the lands of their ancestors. Different American Indian tribes fought on both sides during this conflict.



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### Wasn't this war about land far from North Carolina?

What began as a struggle for control of the Ohio Valley became part of a larger war between France, England, and eventually Spain. Royal Lieutenant Governor Dunmore of Virginia sought aid from other colonies in Virginia's claim for lands in the Ohio Valley when France refused to leave the area claimed by Virginia. North Carolina's provincial Assembly sent some 450 men, under the command of James Innes. Innes's unit was disbanded in 1754, without seeing any real action. Meanwhile, in North Carolina, settlers were attacked by American Indians on the frontier (then the Piedmont). Some settlers believed the French were encouraging such attacks. While the Assembly sent more men into service in 1755, under Major Edward Dobbs, backcountry residents wanted assistance closer to home.

Royal Governor Arthur Dobbs encouraged the provincial Assembly to send help to the Piedmont. In 1755 a company of some 50 men, led by Hugh Waddell, built a fort in the new county of Rowan. Fort Dobbs was the only major military installation between Virginia and South Carolina and served as a storage facility, negotiations site, and a place of shelter for settlers fearing Indian attacks. For three years, troops were stationed there to deter raids by enemies—French or Indian.

### North Carolinians were British?

Remember, North Carolina was a British colony, and whatever was in the hearts of the settlers, they were under British Rule. And at the time of this conflict, few settlers thought to think of themselves as independent from that rule. Separate from the war with the French, British colonists began to war with the Cherokee as the Cherokee increased raids on settlers who moved on their lands. Worried, many Piedmont settlers moved into the fort. In February 1760, Cherokee warriors attacked Fort Dobbs. Led by Waddell, nine men left the fort to confront some 60 to 70 Cherokee. Exchanging gunfire, three men were hurt, and one boy killed. Waddell and his men retreated. Still, the British prevailed in other attacks on the Cherokee, and in 1761, the Cherokee sued for peace. Much farther away, the British defeated the French in Canada, and that territory was surrendered to the English in September 1760.

In 1763 the war ended with the Treaty of Paris. In this treaty, England gained control of the lands between the Appalachians and the Mississippi River and also gained Canada. France's territory was almost completely lost. With threats from the Cherokee and French and their Indian allies removed, North Carolina settlers faced an open frontier, which quickly moved past Fort Dobbs. Another outcome of the war was a damaged British-Cherokee relationship plus a huge debt incurred by the colony. There were other long-term consequences to the war. Colonists gained experience in fighting together toward a common cause; and they would be asked by England to help pay for the expenses incurred in fighting the war in the form of new and increased taxes.

### Increased taxes? It's time for the Revolution!

Not yet. Meet the Regulators. The Regulators were backcountry farmers in the late colonial period who protested a series of government abuses, primarily the actions of appointed judicial and administrative officials who routinely awarded public contracts to friends, charged exorbitant fees,

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and used the legal system to line their pockets. The system in place in colonial North Carolina was ripe for abuse. County justices administered local government. They were appointed by the governor. The governor likewise selected the county sheriff from a list of three candidates supplied by the justices. He appointed registrars and officers of the militia. Multiple officeholding was common. In theory, legal fees were subject to schedules established by the General Assembly in 1715, but abuses were rampant. Many farmers were unable to pay these taxes and fees and as a result lost their land to corrupt officials. About 90 percent of public revenues derived from poll taxes and import duties.

### Why were the backcountry settlers so upset?

The western half of North Carolina began to fill with settlers around 1750, with many newcomers entering the colony by way of the so-called Great Wagon Road. The eastern portion of the colony was more refined and aristocratic, the western more pioneer and democratic. The west was more likely to have German or Scots-Irish settlers, working small farms, while the east was made up largely of English settlers. Large plantations were much more likely to be in the east. Western settlers were underrepresented in the General Assembly, and the western portion of the colony was badly underrepresented in colonial government. Many officeholders in the western portion of the state were not from the region but rather came into the area from the east. In short, the political and judicial machinery of the colony was controlled by easterners. The result of these political, economic, and cultural distinctions between east and west was a system in which abuses largely were restricted to the western portions of the colony. Sectional animosities were heightened with the construction of Tryon Palace, the governor's mansion located in New Bern.

### A palace—in North Carolina?

It wasn't really a palace but an expensive and ornate building that was paid for by poll taxes and a tax on imported wine, rum, and liquor. Construction began on the building in 1767 and was completed in 1770. Many western residents felt that the palace was an unnecessary burden on their finances. It served as a permanent seat of government for the colony. Still, many believed its construction to be unnecessary given the difficulties faced by small farmers who increasingly began to protest the inequities they faced.

### What did the protests look like?

It was widely accepted that the Regulators had legitimate complaints. William Tryon, royal governor from 1765 to 1771, estimated that county sheriffs had embezzled more than half the money due to the government between 1754 and 1767. The Regulator movement is usually dated from the 1766 formation in Orange County of the Sandy Creek Association. At the beginning, the Regulators confined their protests to lawful attempts at redress of their grievances, such as attempting to elect farmers to the General Assembly, publishing pamphlets, and lobbying the General Assembly and the governor. None were successful.

Eventually the Regulators turned to more drastic measures. They refused to pay taxes, confronted officials, and disrupted court proceedings. By 1768 the movement had turned violent. The

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Regulators resorted to riots, beatings, jail burnings, and forced court closings. A leadership group had emerged by this time. It included Herman Husband, an educated farmer and expert pamphleteer; Rednap Howell; William Butler; and James Hunter. Much of their anger was directed against Edmund Fanning, a Yale College graduate who settled in Orange County. Fanning was a judge, militia colonel, register of deeds, and assemblyman. He regarded most farmers as his cultural and intellectual inferiors and gained a reputation for cruelty in his everyday dealings with them.

In April 1768, Regulators staged a disruption in Orange County over a foreclosure on unpaid taxes. Husband and Butler were captured and jailed by Fanning and the Orange County sheriff. Shortly afterward, mob violence in Anson County forced officials to abandon court there. An attack was made on the court in Johnston County, while in another action 300 men burned the jail in Salisbury.

### Did Governor Tryon support the Regulators?

The governor was not unsympathetic to the Regulators, but his duty was to maintain order and control of the colony. Governor Tryon called up militia to protect the Orange County Superior Court in Hillsborough, in which Husband and Butler were scheduled to stand trial on charges of inciting a riot. A militia force of 1,000 protected the court. After receiving assurances of a fair trial, the Regulators dispersed. Husband was acquitted, but Butler and two others were sentenced to fines and prison. Tryon released the prisoners, suspended the fines, and issued a general pardon, except for the leaders of the movement. At the same court, Fanning was found guilty of taking excessive fees and resigned the position of register of deeds for Orange County.

Abuses and hostilities continued, however. In September 1770, the Regulators occupied the courtroom in Hillsborough during the Superior Court session. Fanning was beaten, lawyers were assaulted, and William Hooper, who later would sign the Declaration of Independence, was dragged through the street.

### The Regulators rioted!

Governor Tryon believed he had to make a stronger stand against rebellious acts. He recognized the increasing tensions in the relationship between the British and the colonies, including the controversial Townshend Act, passed in 1767, which imposed external taxation on the colonies. By the time of the 1770 attack in Hillsborough, Tryon and most of the Assembly had become convinced that the Regulators had become a lawless mob. Rumors of an impending march on the colonial capital by the Regulators led to the passage of the Johnston Riot Act, which imposed harsh penalties on rioters and empowered the governor to take whatever steps he deemed necessary to ensure tranquility. The Johnston Riot Act infuriated the Regulators, who continued to protest and threatened to march on New Bern. In the spring of 1771, Tryon called up the militia and marched them into the heart of the Regulator movement.

### What happened when the Regulators and militia met?

The two sides clashed on May 16, 1771, on the banks of Alamance Creek. Tryon had from 1,100 to 1,400 militia, while the Regulators numbered between 2,000 and 3,000 troops. The Regulators, however, were poorly led, poorly armed, and poorly organized. They were overwhelmingly





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defeated in a two-hour battle. The Regulators lost about 20 men killed and 100 wounded, and the militia lost nine dead and 61 wounded. One Regulator was summarily hanged shortly after the battle, and six others were executed after a court-martial. Tryon then issued an offer to pardon anyone who would swear an oath of allegiance to the government. Husband, Howell, Butler, and Hunter were excluded from the amnesty offer and left the colony. More than 6,400 Regulators accepted this offer, ending the conflict.

Within weeks Tryon was off to New York to become that colony's governor. He was replaced by Josiah Martin. The new governor was convinced that the Regulators had legitimate complaints, but the growing crisis prevented him from making substantive reforms. The Regulators' complaints were quickly overtaken by the growing crisis between England and the colonies.

### **Was the War of the Regulation a precursor to the Revolution?**

Not really. When examined closely, the Regulators' demands were made of the existing system, and the sides were mostly regional and class oriented. The Regulators wanted government corruption to end, not the government overthrown.



How would our lives have been different if the Albany Plan of Union had been successful?

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

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### Toward Revolution

#### How does a colony revolt?

Try taxing people when they are poor and hungry. When the French and Indian War (and the Seven Years War in Europe) ended in 1763, it left Great Britain overextended and with considerable financial debt. In an attempt to offset this burden on the treasury, Parliament passed the Stamp Act in 1765 with the endorsement of King George III. The new law required colonists to pay a tax by purchasing a stamp to be placed on printed materials such as newspapers, pamphlets, almanacs, and paperwork printed for business transactions. William Tryon, governor of North Carolina, was responsible for enforcing the Stamp Act in the colony. He soon learned that there was great opposition to the law. Faced with crop failures and a food shortage throughout the colony because of a severe drought, people were not happy with any idea of a tax imposed upon them by the English parliament.

#### How do you protest a law?

Leaders emerged who spoke out against the Stamp Act. John Ashe, Cornelius Harnett, and Hugh Waddell were outspoken leaders in North Carolina against the Stamp Act. Protest demonstrations were held in Wilmington in October 1765 in anticipation of the law going into effect on November 1. A mob cornered William Houston in Wilmington and forced him to resign his position as stamp master (the commissioned agent to sell stamps in North Carolina). When the British ship *HMS Diligence* arrived at Wilmington with the stamps, the colonists stopped the crew from bringing them ashore.

#### Wait—Wilmington?

Remember how hard it had been for explorers and settlers to park their ships off the coast of North Carolina? Following the Tuscarora War in the early 1700s, settlers pushed out the American Indians who lived in the area, and the town of Wilmington was founded in 1739 where the Cape Fear meets the Atlantic. It had the deep waters that allowed ships easier access to the colony, and the town grew quickly.

#### What was the response to the protests in Wilmington?

First you try beer and roasted ox. Governor Tryon, in hopes of placating the angry colonists, met with the leaders and promised to try and get North Carolina exempted from the Stamp Act due to the colony's poverty. In return the leaders affirmed their loyalty to the Crown and promised no violence, but they made it clear to Tryon that they would never accept the tax. Ill-tempered people stalked about in the streets in Wilmington defying the British crewmen from the *HMS Diligence* and *HMS Viper* to try to take any action to enforce the tax. On one occasion Tryon set out free beer

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and roasted an ox to feed the mob as a gesture of his goodwill toward them (and as a cheap bribe to quiet them down), but the colonists dumped the beer in the street and threw the ox into the river.

The greatest crisis occurred in January 1766 when the two British warships seized merchant ships in Wilmington for failure to pay the tax. The colonists were outraged and immediately quarantined the British ships, refusing them any supplies. They then seized Fort Johnson and began to gather for a fight. Governor Tryon was furious at the rebellious colonists and prepared to force them into submission. The opposition leaders met with the naval officers and demanded that they release the merchant ships and take no future action in enforcing the Stamp Act. The officers agreed much to the disgust of the governor. Within months both ships left Wilmington, taking the hated stamps with them.

### How did the government in England respond?

Parliament repealed the Stamp Act in March 1766 to the great joy of English merchants and tradesmen who were suffering from the loss of the American market. It ended the immediate threat of colonial rebellion but left the source of the problem unresolved. Parliament passed the Declaratory Act, which maintained that it had the legal authority to impose taxes on the American colonies. The Americans held to the position that Parliament had no right to tax them. American merchants and the wealthy landowners led the opposition to the Stamp Act. They had shown they could organize and coordinate widespread opposition, mobilize for armed resistance, and most important, force the king and Parliament to back down. The stage was set for future trouble.

### But Governor Tryon was on the side of the colonists, right?

Governor Tryon was displeased with the behavior of his people during the Stamp Act crisis, and he kept close watch on the opposition leaders. He removed Maurice Moore as an assistant district judge in Salisbury because Moore had helped inspire the opposition by writing a pamphlet stating that the colonists “are constitutionally entitled to be taxed only by their own consent.” To push their position, the Assembly issued a statement in May 1768 that only it, and not Parliament, had the right to tax North Carolina citizens.

Tryon and the opposition leaders agreed to disagree on the taxation issue and let it stand there. Peace was disturbed only when troublemakers in the backcountry, called Regulators, rebelled against Tryon and the eastern governmental establishment in 1768. The Regulators caused considerable trouble until Tryon led an army and defeated them in Alamance County in 1771. Still, that regional issue did not move the Stamp Act opposition leaders, who did not support the Regulator movement. Some Stamp Act opposition leaders actually joined the governor in putting down the rebellion.

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So, with the Stamp Act gone, is everyone happy?

Tension between Great Britain and America never truly subsided following the Stamp Act crisis. In 1767 Parliament placed tariffs on goods imported from England to America. The colonies immediately embargoed British goods, which forced a repeal of the tariff laws in 1770. But Parliament then renewed its tariff on tea in 1773. American colonists refused to pay the tea tax and placed an embargo on tea. In Boston, Massachusetts, a group of men dressed as American Indians boarded an English merchant ship in December and tossed its shipment of tea into the harbor. The Boston “Tea Party” sparked an angry response from Great Britain. In June 1774 Parliament passed punitive laws against Boston. Boston Harbor was closed; meetings in Massachusetts were banned; suspected American offenders were to be tried in Britain; and the colonists were forced to quarter British troops garrisoned in their homes. The colonies were outraged with Parliament and began to organize to resist the British authorities.

How did North Carolinians respond to the Boston Tea Party?

North Carolinians joined in support with the other colonies in opposing the government’s retaliatory measures against Massachusetts. In April 1774, William Hooper wrote that he feared “the colonies are striding fast to independence, and ere long will build an empire upon the ruins of Great Britain.” But like most other leaders in America, Hooper desired reconciliation with Great Britain and independence from the Crown. James Iredell wrote extensively defending the American position in an attempt to convince Parliament to alter its stance. Americans held firm in their conviction that Parliament was overstepping its authority to tax the colonies. Opposition leaders established a “Committee of Correspondence” to maintain open communications between the colonies. William Hooper (lawyer), John Harvey (speaker of the Assembly), Edward Vail (planter), Robert Howe (planter), John Ashe (planter), Joseph Hewes (Edenton merchant), Samuel Johnston (lawyer), and Cornelius Harnett (Wilmington merchant) were named as committee members, a good indication of the primary leaders of North Carolina’s revolutionary movement.

Wow! Governor Tryon must not have been pleased.

Wrong governor. In 1771 Tryon became the governor of New York, and Josiah Martin, a well-connected British gentleman, became North Carolina’s royal governor in August 1771. In an attempt to prevent the rebellion from gaining ground in North Carolina, Governor Martin dissolved the Assembly in March 1774. In August the leaders gathered in New Bern, despite the governor’s ban to meet, and “abused in a most shocking manner” supporters of the Crown. John Harvey was elected moderator of the meeting, which passed several resolutions.

Resolutions? Like a Declaration?

Not exactly. This Assembly, North Carolina’s First Provincial Congress, wrote resolutions calling for an end to the slave trade; an embargo on English textiles in favor of colonial products; an embargo on East India Company products; an embargo on tea; and the right to hold court and pass local laws. The body declared that Parliament’s attempt to tax the colonies was unlawful, illegal, and



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unconstitutional. But they also declared that they remained “His Majesty’s most dutiful and loyal subjects.” Richard Caswell, Joseph Hewes, and William Hooper were dispatched as delegates to Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, with the resolution to share it with the First Continental Congress.

### A Provincial Congress? A Continental Congress? What?

Provincial Congresses were gatherings of colonists apart from the assemblies organized by their official colonial government (those inclined to protest the Acts coming from England). The Continental Congress was a gathering of representatives from the colonies, again, often elected by the provincial congress gatherings. These men (and they were all men) worked to advocate for the colonists’ interests and positions that were contrary to British laws, such as the tax on tea. They were not recognized by official colonial governors or assemblies.

Between August 1774 and 1776, five Provincial Congresses in North Carolina met and served as a government for the colony, for the people who ended up supporting the Revolution. These Congresses created bills of credit to finance their cause, developed militia for defense of the colony, and eventually wrote a state constitution.

### Anything else going on?

Not much, just a North Carolina tea party, of a sort. In October 1774, 51 women in Edenton made a resolution to stop buying imports from England, in support of the resolutions made by the First Provincial Congress. Organized by Penelope Barker, the women’s resolution agreed to boycott English tea and cloth, which was a major declaration, as imports supplied those much needed and desired goods. The women signed the document, and it was sent to England. On January 16, 1775, London’s *Morning Chronicle*, and *London Advertiser* reported on the actions of the women and included a drawing that depicted the women in an unflattering way. The “Edenton Tea Party” was one of the first public political acts by women in America and points out how women were both informed and forming opinions about their lives in this land.

### Everyone getting along in North Carolina?

Not exactly. In the spring of 1775, tensions increased. Colonel John Ashe rejected Governor Martin’s commission to form a militia under his rule and organized troops independent of the governor. Other leaders—Cornelius Harnett, Robert Howe, Alexander Lillington, James Moore, and Abner Nash—joined Ashe in organizing the militia. The governor countered their moves by reminding the Scottish Highlanders and former Regulators of the pardons they had received and their oaths to remain loyal to the king under the penalty of death.

### Then what happened?

Escalation of tensions increased when in April 1775, in response to Resolutions adopted by the First Continental Congress in Philadelphia, John Harvey called for a second North Carolina convention, or Congress, to meet. Governor Martin issued a proclamation forbidding the convention and then

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called for the Assembly to meet in New Bern. Harvey and the other representatives agreed to meet as the Assembly but decided to hold their separate convention at the same time. Governor Martin was angered, and when he addressed the Assembly, he declared their convention illegal. Then he dissolved what was to be the last *colonial* Assembly in North Carolina.

### Did the Second Provincial Congress meet?

Yes! Representatives from 32 of the 38 counties and from two of the six towns met in New Bern April 3–7, 1775. Agreeing with much that the Continental Congress proposed, they had resolved to stop importing and using British tea and other goods (excepting medicine). “Goods” included enslaved people as well. They also agreed to stop exporting to England and to boycott those who did not comply with these resolves. This group also reelected Caswell, Hewes, and Hooper as delegates to the Second Continental Congress.

### They meant business! Anything else going on?

Soon after North Carolina’s Second Provincial Congress met, opposition to the government turned violent when Great Britain sent troops to force its subjects to comply with the laws. British troops met the colonial militia in Lexington, Massachusetts, on April 19, 1775, and a battle began. News of the clash spread quickly through the colonies. The response from people in Mecklenburg County was swift. Meeting on May 31, a committee led by Thomas Polk gathered at the county courthouse in Charlotte to draft Resolves, which included a statement denying Parliament’s authority over the colonies. Published in the *North Carolina Gazette* on June 16, 1775, the radical resolves inspired others in Wilmington, Fayetteville, Pitt County, and Tryon County to pass similar statements in the months following this event. Governor Martin reported in a letter that the Mecklenburg County Resolves “surpass all the horrid and treasonable publications that the inflammatory spirits of this Continent have yet produced.” Martin’s letter was written from Fort Johnson, as he had fled the Governor’s Mansion (Tryon Palace) in New Bern and sent his family to New York as tensions mounted.

### Wait, Fort Johnson?

Royal Governor Gabriel Johnson led the effort to build this fort, starting in 1745 at the mouth of the Cape Fear River. Not fully completed until 1764, the fort sheltered Governor Martin when he fled New Bern at the end of May 1775.

### Things are happening quickly! Time for a Revolution?

Remember that despite the radical resolves from backcountry people in Mecklenburg County, the Provincial Congress and the Continental Congress both still called for negotiation and reconciliation with Britain. When North Carolina’s Joseph Hewes wrote in July 1775, “We do not want to be independent; we want no revolution,” he spoke for the Continental Congress. It was not calling for a rebellion but was attempting the same path it followed previously when the Americans forced a repeal of the Stamp Act. Even after the accidental battle at Lexington, leaders in the Continental

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Congress expressed their desire for reconciliation with Great Britain. They petitioned King George III directly with their grievances in hopes of resolving the crisis without further bloodshed. But they did not seem to understand that the king was firmly against negotiating with them over taxation and would not entertain any petition from the Continental Congress, which he considered an illegal assembly.

### Which king?

George III was king of England before, during, and after the American Revolution. His reign began in 1760 and ended in 1820. While he opposed the colonies' desire for independence, he was not directly responsible for the Stamp Act, Townshend Duties, or other actions that the colonists found to their disliking. Remember, to England, the colonies served to provide them with materials and trade opportunities. Wars with France and Spain, further expansion of colonization and trade efforts around the globe, and the cost of administering colonies meant England needed income, or tax monies. To George III, the Continental Congress was an illegal gathering; he proclaimed the men to be in rebellion and was preparing to put them all to the sword. The colonists learned of the king's forcefulness when his army attacked the Americans at Bunker Hill, Massachusetts, on June 17, 1775. It became clear then to all concerned that the disagreement over taxation had turned into a bloody and unwanted altercation.

### The Battle of Bunker Hill! What was the colonists' response?

One colonial response came from the Continental Congress, who decided it prudent to organize an army (under newly appointed general George Washington) and call forth the militia for a common defense. In North Carolina, the Provincial Congress called for militia and had them posted in key areas like Edenton, New Bern, Salisbury, and Wilmington. In August Governor Martin declared their actions to be acts of sedition and treason and singled out Ashe, Caswell, Hewes, Hooper, and Howe for special condemnation. Governor Martin had retreated again, from Fort Johnson to a British warship outside Wilmington after escaping three attempts to capture him. He called up the Regulators, Highland Scots, and other Loyalists to support the Crown.

### Did everyone take sides, Loyalists or Patriots?

Of course not. Probably many people wanted to have peace, without turmoil, and to get on with the business of living. Others, like the Quakers, intentionally chose not to take sides.

### Who were the Quakers?

The Religious Society of Friends, or Quakers, was founded in England by George Fox, whose ministry helped the group grow quickly in the mid-1600s. Their understanding of humans as "children of light" meant that Friends disavowed ritual, and their main tenets of belief included pacifism (opposition to war or violence) and the abolition of slavery. Persecuted in England, William Penn established a colony for them in Pennsylvania. George Fox brought Quaker missionaries to North Carolina in 1671, and the faith was established in the Albemarle region.

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Friends settled farther south and by the mid-1700s were coming in large numbers from Pennsylvania and Virginia to the backcountry, including Thomas Beals, who established the Quaker community of New Garden in 1748, in present day Guilford County. For many years, Quakers were exempt from colonial militia, due to their pacificism, although they paid extra taxes for their exemption from this duty. As a community, the Quakers did not support the call for independence as the Revolution approached and sought to remain neutral during the buildup to and during the war. But New Garden was far from Wilmington, where Governor Martin sought support with his call to action.

### Governor Martin issued a call to action? What happened?

In February 1776, civil war erupted across the colony. Local fights broke out in the backcountry, and on February 27 in battle at Moores Creek Bridge, the Highland Scots were defeated in their attempt to join Governor Martin in Wilmington. This single event marked the point in North Carolina where there was no turning back. When news of the victory spread to the sister colonies, it inspired many others to stand up to what they saw as the growing tyranny of Great Britain.

### The Civil War?

Not *the* Civil War, but a civil war. A civil war is a fight between citizens of the same country, or in this case, colony. While some colonists in North Carolina (and America) supported the Provincial Congresses and Continental Congress, others openly disapproved and sided with England. Many others hoped to live in peace and were not prepared to decide to support one side or the other. Of course, American Indians and enslaved people would have their own responses to the issues of the day. The skirmishes across the backcountry and at Moores Creek spoke to the differences that resulted in violence between North Carolina colonists who had the freedom or requirement to make those choices. The Patriots' victory at Moores Creek inspired political resolve as well.

### Political Resolve? The Declaration of Independence?

Not yet. In April 1776, North Carolina leaders at the Fourth Provincial Congress, under the leadership of Samuel Johnson, officially declared their bid for independence from Great Britain when they met in Halifax. From the gathering of the Second Continental Congress in Philadelphia, Joseph Hewes wrote Samuel Johnston prior to the Halifax meeting: "I see no prospect of a reconciliation; nothing is left now but to fight it out." The delegates to the Fourth Provincial Congress agreed with his viewpoint and on April 12, 1776, unanimously passed a resolution drafted by Cornelius Harnett stating in part, "Resolved, That the delegates of this colony in the Continental Congress be empowered to concur with the delegates of the other colonies in declaring independency." The resolution, requesting North Carolina's delegates to the Second Continental Congress to call for independence, was the first passed by any colony to that date and was sent to Joseph Hewes in Philadelphia. On May 27, 1776, Hewes presented it to the Continental Congress. Hewes then supported Virginia's Richard Henry Lee on June 7 in a resolution calling on the Continental Congress to declare independence from Great Britain. Many of the other colonies'



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delegates hesitated. Representing North Carolina, Joseph Hewes pressed the issue for several weeks. After much debate, the Congress passed Thomas Jefferson's Declaration of Independence on July 4, 1776. North Carolina's Joseph Hewes, William Hooper, and John Penn ultimately signed the revolutionary document. That which began as a stand against a perceived injustice resulted in a revolution and a new nation. North Carolina was in the forefront of the momentous event.





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### ***Artifact Chit-Chat***

Watch the museum's seven-minute video Artifact Chit - Chat, which shares the stories of actual artifacts in the museum's collection. Video Description: A key, a cannonball, a tea caddy . . . Learn about North Carolina's role in the American Revolution through the, um, eyes of some . . . uh, things that were actually there!

Watch at: <https://www.ncmuseumofhistory.org/vodform-chitchat>

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### ***Artifact Chit-Chat*** **Shrewsbury Cakes Recipe**

Now that you've read all about the Edenton Tea Party, have your own, complete with Shrewsbury Cakes!

From *The Manuscript of Ann Maria Morris*, Special Collections Library, Maryland Historical Society, c. 1824

#### Ingredients

- 2 Sticks of Salted Butter, Softened
- 1 cup + 1 Tablespoon Granulated Sugar
- 1 Large Egg
- 2 1/2 Cups of Flour (plus more for the board)
- 2 Tablespoons (or to taste) Caraway Seeds

1. Cream together the butter and sugar. Then, add the egg and beat.
2. Add the caraway seeds to the flour.
3. Add the flour mixture to the butter/sugar mixture and mix until everything comes together in a ball.
4. Wrap the dough in plastic wrap and refrigerate for at least one hour. Remove from the refrigerator and let come to room temperature.
5. Preheat the oven to 350° F.
6. Roll out the dough to about ¼" thickness; add enough flour to the board that you can work some into the dough if it is not firm enough to roll out. Cut the dough out in 2.5 inch circles and place on parchment-lined cookie sheet.
7. Bake until they just start to turn slightly golden around the edges, about 11-12 minutes. Remove from oven and slide the parchment with the cookies onto a counter to cool.

Yield: About 5 dozen 2.5" rounds

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### A Place of War

#### How did the Revolutionary War begin for North Carolina?

When North Carolina's royal governor Josiah Martin fled New Bern on June 2, 1775, and later escaped to a British warship off the Wilmington coast, he had no intention of abandoning the colony to revolutionaries. He believed that 10,000 Loyalists in the colony, especially in the backcountry, opposed the revolutionary government. Martin immediately began plans to reclaim his colony. In fact, he thought North Carolina was a key part of a Southern Strategy for the British army. Meanwhile, the North Carolina revolutionaries organized a new government and raised troops.

#### Southern Strategy?

The British developed a plan to regain control of the colonies with a strategy that rested upon the assumption that many southerners remained loyal to the British. They thought to win back one southern colony at a time, turn it over to Loyalists, and win the war. Martin diligently worked to advance his plan to regain control of North Carolina and requested British troops and ships be sent to North Carolina. Martin believed that, with British-inspired slave revolts and additional Loyalist support in the colony, the British army could break the rebellion in North and South Carolina as well as Georgia.

#### Loyalists?

Remember, Scottish Highlanders, many of whom settled in the Cape Fear region of America, were required to take an oath to support England. Other colonists were not persuaded by the cause of the Patriots and remained loyal to England. Governor Martin was convinced that the backcountry Highlanders would help crush the rebellion in North Carolina. He believed that enslaved people would escape or revolt and join the British cause as well.

#### Why would enslaved people fight for England?

News spread throughout enslaved communities of Virginia's royal governor Dunmore's proclamation promising freedom to enslaved people who escaped and joined the British army. Several uprisings occurred along the North Carolina coast in response to that offer, and North Carolina militia intervened.

#### What else did Governor Martin plan?

Governor Martin sent his representative Alexander McLean as well as two Gaelic-speaking British army officers, General Donald MacDonald and Lieutenant Colonel Donald McLeod, to recruit supporters in Cross Creek (present-day Fayetteville), the center of settlement for Highlanders. Gaelic was the first language of Highland Scots. An estimated 3,000 Loyalists,

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mostly Highlanders, were recruited. In return for their service, they were to receive 200 acres of land as well as reimbursement for supplies, and would be free from taxes for 20 years. In February 1776, MacDonald started the march to Wilmington with 1,600 men. The remainder waited at home for the arrival of the British army.

### Nice plan; did it work?

A three-minute battle decided the fate of this plan. Learning of Martin's plan, the Patriots deployed three officers, Colonel James Moore, Colonel Richard Caswell, and Colonel Alexander Lillington. The most direct route to the sea was blocked by commander Colonel Moore at Rockfish Creek near Cross Creek. This action forced the Loyalists to use a different route, which meant crossing Moores Creek. Patriot Colonel Lillington, along with 150 minutemen, worked to block Moores Creek Bridge. They built earthworks on the east bank of the creek, which could be seen from the bridge. Colonel Caswell and his 850 militiamen arrived at the creek, bringing two artillery pieces: "Old Mother Covington," a 2½-pound cannon, and "Her Daughter," a ½-pound swivel gun.

Some of Caswell's men set up camp on the west bank of the creek as the Loyalists advanced. Once they were close, they sent a messenger under a flag of truce offering pardon for Patriots who surrendered. Refusing, the Patriots sent the messenger back, along with the information he had gained that the Patriots were *in front of the creek*.

### Why does it matter if Patriots are in front of or behind the creek?

Strategy! If the Patriots were between the Loyalists and the creek, the British officers knew they would be required to engage in battle to get across the creek. They still hoped to arrive at the coast without engagement. When British General MacDonald fell ill, Lieutenant Colonel McLeod took command and decided to cross Moores Creek Bridge under cover of darkness and slip past the Patriots. Despite the cold and rain, he marched his men through swampy muddy conditions toward the Patriot camp.

### When did this happen?

February! It was winter and had been raining for days. On the evening of February 26, 1776, while the Loyalists planned their nighttime march, Caswell had his men cross the bridge to the east bank of the creek and join Lillington's forces, meaning all the Patriots now had the creek and the bridge *in front of them*. To confuse the Loyalists, they left their tents up and campfires burning on the west bank. To make crossing the bridge more of a challenge, they dismantled many of the bridge's crossbeams and greased the rails with soft soap.

### This is getting tense. When are the three minutes up?

They haven't started yet. At 1:00 a.m., on February 27, 1776, the Loyalists began their rainy march to Moores Creek. Arriving at daybreak on the east side of the creek, they found Caswell's empty camp. Men on the other side of the bridge called to the Loyalists, asking if they were "friends." The reply came back, "to the king." Then a Loyalists called out to the men across the bridge in Gaelic, but there was no reply. Both sides knew where the other force was located.

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Only 500 of his 1,600 men had guns, but McLeod decided to attack the Patriots. Rallying his troops, they moved to the bridge, only to discover the missing bridge planks. To the cry of “King George and Broadwords,” McLeod’s Highlanders crossed the girders using the points of their swords for purchase on the bridge rails. Charging up the causeway, they met the cannon and musket fire of the Patriots. Loyalists fell along the road and on the bridge, some drowning in Moores Creek. Within three minutes, the battle was over.

McLeod and more than 30 Loyalists died, along with one Patriot, John Grady. Another Patriot was injured. Many of the remaining Loyalists fled for safety. Patriots captured many of them, including General Donald MacDonald who had slept through the battle. Numbering about 1,000, the Patriots had defeated 1,600 Loyalists. Following the battle, captured Loyalists (excepting officers) who took an oath not to fight against the Patriot cause again were released. The British officers were incarcerated in Halifax, North Carolina. From the Loyalists, the Patriots retrieved guns, shot bags, dirks and swords, medicine chests, wagons, and horses, along with £15,000 (about \$3 million today!).

**Wait, February 1776? The Declaration of Independence hasn’t been written yet!**

You’ll remember the Halifax Resolves? The success of the Patriots emboldened North Carolina’s Fourth Provincial Congress, meeting in Halifax in April 1776, to call for “independency.” They instructed North Carolina’s delegates to the Second Continental Congress, meeting in Philadelphia, to vote for liberty. And so forth.

**What about the British army in Wilmington?**

The British fleet was late, arriving on the Cape Fear River in May 1776 after battling bad seas and weather for some time. Learning of the Patriot victory at Moores Creek, they proceeded to Fort Sullivan near Charleston, South Carolina, which was to have been the second part of the Southern Strategy. For about 10 hours, the British ships fired nonstop at the palmetto-log fort, defended by some 400 Patriots, including some sent from North Carolina, and 25 guns. The logs did not splinter, and sand absorbed the shot. The British fleet left, sailing north with Governor Martin.

**Was that the end of the Southern Strategy?**

It was postponed, to be sure. British agents had encouraged the Cherokee in the mountains to push eastward to Burke County, although they were defeated in July 1776 by the Patriot militia under General Griffith Rutherford. The Patriots decided to counterattack, and in August, assisted by Catawba Indians, they drove the Cherokee back into the mountains through Swannanoa Gap (near Asheville). In actions that had long-lasting consequences, Rutherford’s men destroyed 36 Cherokee villages and acres of crops within weeks. Meanwhile, South Carolina militia also pushed into the mountains and destroyed the Lower settlement villages before joining up with Rutherford. Together, they scorched the Middle settlements. When the Virginians marched on the Upper settlements, the Cherokee sued for peace.

The once promising plans of the British to reclaim the southern colonies in 1776 ended in failure. North Carolina Loyalists were left isolated in the backcountry when the British departed. Some



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Loyalists escaped to join the British army, but most had to wait five years smoldering in anger from the abuse of their revolutionary neighbors before the British returned. The Cherokee remained unpredictable but subdued by the violent destruction of their lands. With the British gone, closely guarded enslaved people had no chance for freedom. The Southern Strategy was abandoned for a while.

### Did North Carolina get a rest after Moores Creek?

While the British Army was not present in North Carolina during the war years of 1777-1779, North Carolinians were still involved. Since the northern and middle states were hard-pressed by the British, North Carolina revolutionaries agreed to send help.

### What kind of help?

In April 1777, Francis Nash was given command of the North Carolina Continental Line. Continental Regiments were requested to form by the new United States Congress to fight for the Revolution. The commander in chief of the Continental army was George

Washington. As soon as Brigadier General Nash gathered his men in Halifax, he started north, taking with him Loyalist prisoners captured the previous year at Moores Creek. After a delay to recover from smallpox inoculations, the Carolinians reached General George Washington's army in New Jersey in July. During Washington's fall campaign in Pennsylvania, the North Carolinians fought at Brandywine and Germantown, where heavy losses included General Nash, Colonel Edward Buncombe, and Lieutenant Colonel Henry Irwin, who were killed or died of wounds.

Washington's army could not prevent the British capture of Philadelphia, an embarrassing loss to the revolutionary government. But when American General Horatio Gates's army defeated and captured a separate British army at Saratoga, New York, on October 17, 1777, it badly damaged the British war effort by encouraging France to form an alliance with the Americans.

### How were the soldiers?

While the British army occupied Philadelphia in the winter of 1778, Washington's army built a camp at Valley Forge. The North Carolina Continentals numbered 1,000 men, though more than a third were generally sick. They were cold and starved, and poorly clad and sick, but remained steadfast with Washington throughout the winter with fewer desertions than any of the other state troops. Washington slowly rebuilt his army in the spring of 1778 and in June followed the British army on its return to New York. The armies clashed at Monmouth, New Jersey, and fought an inconclusive battle. The remainder of the year, and through 1779, the North Carolina Continental Line, including 58 enlisted free African Americans, was posted in New York.

### Is the war over yet?

Not for a few more years. In December 1778, the British slipped south and captured Savannah, Georgia, and won back the entire colony in 1779. Colonel John Hamilton's North Carolina Loyalists, who had escaped the Moores Creek disaster, were part of the British invasion force. Revolutionary attempts to recapture Georgia failed. Without the needed troops to stop the British invasion of

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South Carolina, General Washington had to send his remaining North Carolina Continentals to Charleston. They departed New York in late November 1779 and arrived in Charleston in March 1780.

### Wait, British back in the South?

The British army under General Henry Clinton arrived at Charleston in February 1780 and soon surrounded the city. On May 12, American General Benjamin Lincoln surrendered his trapped army of more than 500 men, including more than 800 soldiers of the North Carolina Continental Line and more than 1,200 North Carolina militiamen. North

Carolina lost 19 of its finest officers, its entire Continental Line (the most experienced troops the state had in service), and its most dedicated militiamen. They were imprisoned until the war ended. General James Hogan, along with many of his men, died in prison. For the first time since the war began, the state was practically defenseless to British invasion.

### Sounds like that Strategy was working?

Yes, in ways that remind us that history is not all “good” or “bad.” The British promise to free enslaved men who enlisted in their army gained thousands of African Americans as they fled to British lines. So many enslaved people arrived in Charleston that Lord Cornwallis gave Wilmington native John Cruden the job of organizing them to assist the army. In 1779 the Continental Congress had recommended that African Americans be enlisted in the American army in exchange for their freedom, but South Carolina and Georgia leaders refused. Washington already had free blacks fighting in his army, but generally African Americans were utilized as laborers, not as soldiers. Enslaved men were not generally allowed to fight in the army. Most discouraging was the 1780 North Carolina law that promised an enslaved person and 300 acres of land to each white soldier who enlisted for three years. Other states had similar laws that prevented African Americans from sharing in the struggle for freedom and independence.

### The British have Georgia and South Carolina. Guess what’s next?

You’re right, if you think the British are headed north. After Cornwallis took command of the British army in Charleston, he immediately marched it north into the interior. His cavalry under Lieutenant Colonel Banastre Tarleton attacked and killed revolutionary soldiers in the Waxhaws region on the North Carolina border on May 29, 1780. News of Charleston’s surrender and of the “Waxhaws Massacre” soon spread through North Carolina. Cornwallis already had North Carolina Highlanders serving in his army, and he knew more Loyalists awaited his arrival.

### The Loyalists are still around?

They had been waiting for a few years. Cornwallis sent North Carolina native Colonel John Moore home to organize the Loyalists. Moore ignored Cornwallis’s order to wait for the army before mobilizing and soon had 1,000 men gathered at Ramsour’s Mill (near Lincolnton). The revolutionaries under General Griffith Rutherford were quick to respond. Patriot Colonel Francis Locke’s 400 militiamen rushed to stop the Loyalists from joining Cornwallis. On June 20, Locke’s

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militiamen attacked, and after a bloody battle of neighbor killing neighbor, they defeated and scattered the Loyalists. In July another group of 400 Loyalists under Rowan County resident Colonel Samuel Bryan gathered at Colson's Mill (in Stanly County). But Colonel William L. Davidson's militia attacked and dispersed them. Many Loyalists reached Cornwallis, nevertheless.

**This sounds complicated.**

War requires people to make decisions based on many factors, including their political, economic, and religious beliefs. For some, the choices appeared very basic: enslaved people sought freedom while many did not want to leave families; American Indians had to make choices they thought would help maintain their lives and culture. For some North Carolinians, the choice was not between the "Call of the Mother Country" and "American Liberty" but required discerning which position benefited their lives and that of their families better; which allowed survival. The civil war between neighbors continued along the North and South Carolina border through the summer of 1780.

**Where is the American Army?**

American General Horatio Gates, the self-proclaimed hero of Saratoga, was sent south to rebuild the American army to confront Cornwallis. Gates had only 1,000 Maryland and Delaware Continental Line troops under General Jean De Kalb and 2,000 militiamen from the Carolinas and Virginia. But Gates was overconfident and decided to march south below Charlotte. On August 15, 1780, he met with disaster at Camden, South Carolina, where his men were overwhelmed and routed by the more experienced soldiers of British General Cornwallis. Patriot General Richard Caswell's North Carolina militia fought well but was forced to retreat. De Kalb and his Continentals fought to the death. General Gates abandoned his men during the battle and fled back to North Carolina. He did not stop running until he reached Hillsborough, 180 miles away. He left behind 1,000 American soldiers captured, including North Carolina's General Rutherford, and several hundred killed or wounded. Only 700 American survivors made it to Charlotte, where they regrouped and then followed Gates to Hillsborough.

**It sounds like the British are about to win this war!**

General Cornwallis, meet the Hornet's Nest. Following his victory at Camden, British General Cornwallis decided to press on to North Carolina. He arrived at Charlotte on September 26, 1780, with 2,200 men. The Patriot militia there, led by General Lee Davidson, retreated, although Davidson sent Colonel William R. Davie to delay Cornwallis at Charlotte. Davie had about 150 men, supplemented by 14 local volunteers.

**Was Charlotte a big city then?**

In September 1780, Charlotte consisted of two streets, with about 20 houses. The intersection of the streets was where the courthouse stood. Today, that intersection of Trade and Tryon Streets is noted for the abundance of skyscrapers nearby. The courthouse was raised on pillars, and it was underneath those pillars that Colonel Davie placed a number of men, with others under cover of trees ahead. British cavalry, seeing the Patriots, charged, but the Americans waited until they were

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in close range to shoot, startling the British who fell back. Two more cavalry charges failed to dislodge the much smaller force, but with the British beginning to flank them, Davie withdrew his men. The volunteers, led by Captain Joseph Graham, helped Davie and his men get away, skirmishing with the British for four miles outside of Charlotte at Sugar Creek Church, where Graham was wounded.

### What did this mean to the war?

The battle in Charlotte and the subsequent harassment of the British there for the following days allowed for precious time for American forces to regroup after Camden and demonstrated the resolve of the Patriots in Mecklenburg County. And General Cornwallis needed to rest his men and replenish supplies as well. No British ships with supplies could reach this part of the state. With the British forces doing well, General Cornwallis hoped for and anticipated a Loyalist uprising. He dispatched Major Patrick Ferguson with a force of over 1,000 Loyalists to the west to recruit and gather provisions for the army. But when Ferguson's men went from farm to farm confiscating food and cattle, he stirred up the backcountry locals against him.

### Backcountry men? Is that the Piedmont?

By 1780 the backcountry had moved farther west, to more mountainous parts of North Carolina. More than 1,000 angry mountain men started after British Major Ferguson, and on October 7, 1780, they surrounded him and his Loyalist volunteers at King's Mountain. After a sharp battle, they killed Ferguson and 157 of his men, severely wounded 163, and captured 698. Nine prisoners were hanged on the spot in retaliation for similar British executions; the rest were marched to the Moravian town of Salem as captives.

### Did General Cornwallis decide to go after the mountain men?

Learning of Ferguson's disaster at King's Mountain and the growing force of 3,000 men coming after him, General Cornwallis decided to abandon Charlotte and retreat back into South Carolina for the winter. With the threat gone, most of the North Carolina mountain men went home. Cornwallis left one final gift to the area, a nickname which they hold dear. After 16 trying days in the Charlotte area, he was reported to have said, "Let's get out of here; this place is a damned hornet's nest." And Hornet's Nest it remains.

### Was that the last of fighting in North Carolina?

Not by a long shot. Southern Strategy, remember? In December 1780, General Nathaniel Greene replaced Horatio Gates as the southern American commander. Greene found 1,400 men in Charlotte awaiting him, of whom only 800 were properly clothed and

armed. North Carolinians General William L. Davidson and Colonel William R. Davie had done well just to keep those few in the field but promised that more men were willing to join the army when needed. Greene immediately worked to improve the conditions of his men and pressed Davidson to rally the militiamen and Davie to gather provisions. On December 16 Greene sent General Daniel



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Morgan with 600 men to western South Carolina to encourage continued local resistance to Cornwallis. Greene moved the rest of the army southeastward to block Cornwallis from reaching the Loyalist Highlanders at Cross Creek.

By mid-January 1781, British General Cornwallis had increased his army to nearly 3,300 men and was preparing to strike north again. To begin his campaign, he sent Lieutenant Colonel Banastre Tarleton with 1,000 men to defeat Morgan's growing detachment of 800 men. Tarleton caught up with Morgan at Cowpens, South Carolina, on January 17. Morgan stopped and prepared for the battle, placing his troops in well-thought-out positions. Tarleton, always impatient and disdainful of his foe, rushed into the battle piecemeal and attacked with little preparation. A vicious battle ensued, resulting in the complete destruction of Tarleton's command. Tarleton lost 110 killed and 712 captured, including over 200 wounded. Morgan also captured two field guns, 800 muskets, 100 horses, and 35 wagons. With his spoils of victory in hand, Morgan withdrew to North Carolina with Cornwallis in close pursuit.

### The British are coming!

Exactly. Patriot General Davidson quickly gathered 800 militiamen and in late January met Morgan's force north of Charlotte. Together they formed a defensive line along the Catawba River. General Greene moved his portion of the army toward Salisbury. With his army scattered, Greene decided not to fight Cornwallis, and ordered everyone to withdraw to Salisbury. He left Davidson with 500 men to delay Cornwallis as long as possible. Early in the morning of February 1, 1781, Cornwallis forced a crossing over the river at Cowan's Ford after a sharp fight. Most disastrous to the Americans was that a Loyalist guide killed General Davidson. His death cost Greene not only one of his most competent officers but also the most respected leader of the Piedmont militiamen. With Davidson's death, many of the Patriot militia gave up the fight and went home, never to return.

### The Patriots keep withdrawing.

Sometimes withdrawing is a strategy. British General Cornwallis pushed his army to Salisbury, but when he arrived, he found that Greene had escaped farther north. The British moved up the Yadkin River, crossed at Shallow Ford, and marched through the Moravian towns of Bethania, Bethabara, and Salem. But American General Greene had already reached Guilford Courthouse and was headed for the Dan River crossings and

Virginia. Cornwallis, determined to catch and destroy Greene's army, pushed his men to the breaking point. Each army was about equal distance from the river, but the Americans outmarched the British and crossed first, taking with them the only boats. When Cornwallis's weary army arrived, they could not cross the river. Cornwallis was 240 miles from his base of supplies in South Carolina, and his men were exhausted and sick with smallpox. He withdrew to Hillsborough to rest and try to rally the Loyalists to his banner. Instead he was met with a sour and hostile population that offered little support. Cornwallis had to rely on hundreds of escaped enslaved men who had joined his army to search the countryside for badly needed provisions.



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### What about the Loyalists?

Loyalists in North Carolina were still fighting. On February 19, 1781, American General Greene sent Colonel Henry Lee's cavalry back to North Carolina to link up with reinforcements from South Carolina. Meanwhile, 400 Loyalists under Colonel John Pyle were marching to join Cornwallis. When these two groups met by accident on February 25, American Colonel Lee's men killed Pyle's Loyalist force in a surprise attack known thereafter as "Pyle's Massacre." About a week later, British Lieutenant Colonel Tarleton attacked another Loyalist group by mistake. After such disastrous receptions, few Loyalists came forward to join General Cornwallis.

### But which side is winning?

It is hard to tell sometimes, but American General Greene's army, which reentered the state on February 22, had increased to more than 4,000 men. It was as strong as it ever would be but consisted mostly of militiamen who might on any day leave for home. British General Cornwallis had less than 2,000 men, made up of mostly veteran British regulars, but they were about to collapse from exhaustion. Each commander believed it was time to fight. When Greene returned to Guilford Courthouse, that was the challenge, and Cornwallis immediately marched there to attack.

### Guilford Courthouse?

Located in the Piedmont, Guilford Courthouse was a small hamlet in 1781, and today is the site of Greensboro. On March 15, after several hours of preliminary fighting at the New Market Meeting House, the main battle was waged at Guilford Courthouse. American General Greene used a tactic that had worked at the Battle of Cowpens—"defense-in-depth"—where he formed three lines with his 4,500 soldiers. North Carolina militia made up the first line; Virginia militiamen formed the second; and the third was held by Continental Regulars—the most experienced soldiers. His hope was that the advance of the British would be exhausted by the first two lines and would suffer many casualties, allowing for a definite victory by the third line.

### Did defense-in-depth work?

Two and a half hours of battle made clear what worked. British General Cornwallis advanced his 1,900 men, starting at 1:30 p.m. When the Americans opened fire, the British continued advancing, and the North Carolina militiamen fired once more before retreating into the woods and leaving their equipment behind. The Virginia militiamen offered greater resistance, but when the British engaged them from center, left, and right, they too retreated. Still, the British ranks were rattled as they approached the Continental soldiers. The first British unit was driven back, and when another British unit advanced, a counterattack from the Continentals stopped them. At this point, General Cornwallis ordered artillery to fire, hitting both his own men and the Americans. With British infantry still advancing, Greene ordered retreat. It was about 4:00 p.m.

### The British went after the Americans, right?

While the British "won" the battle, the losses they endured meant that could not pursue General Greene and his men. Where American General Greene lost 6 percent of his force, British General Cornwallis lost 26 percent of his men. In fact, both sides needed help. The afternoon battle as well

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as a skirmish earlier in the day had occurred in and around the Quaker community of New Garden. The Quakers would not fight, but they did help heal. British General Cornwallis left many wounded (between 64 and 134 men) at the New Garden community, where the Quakers cared for them. When American General Nathanael Greene, who was raised a Quaker, heard of the Friends' care of the British soldiers, he wrote the community seeking their help for the American wounded. The Quakers agreed, believing it their calling to help all. Soldiers were cared for at the Meeting House and in individual homes, despite both sides having recently looted them.

### Where did Cornwallis go with the rest of his army?

Cornwallis decided to get his army to Wilmington to rest and seek reinforcements. After the forced march through North Carolina and the battle, he had only 1,400 worn-out men left. On the way to the coast, he marched through Cross Creek, believing that the Highlanders would join his army and supply it with needed provisions, but he received little help. Too many years of isolation and abuse had beaten down the Loyalist community. After reaching Wilmington, Cornwallis rested his men but had to post a cavalry guard made up of former enslaved men to keep his men from deserting. Back in London, a member of Parliament, Charles James Fox, learning of the British victory at Guilford Courthouse, told the House of Commons, "Another such victory would ruin the British army."

### Where did the Americans go?

American General Greene took his army into South Carolina. On April 25 Cornwallis started his march to Virginia. He believed that to secure North Carolina, he needed to invade Virginia. Traveling across the state, British and Loyalist forces destroyed Patriot property on their way into Virginia. In May 1781, British General Cornwallis left North Carolina and headed to Yorktown, Virginia.

### Yorktown?

At Yorktown, British General Cornwallis and his army were defeated by General George Washington and the French on October 19, 1781. Learning of this defeat, the British in Wilmington began withdrawing, and all royal troops were gone by November 18, 1781.

### Wait—the war's over, just like that?

Not exactly. For one thing, when the war ended, the British held many North Carolina soldiers who had been captured in Charles Town on prison ships. The conditions on these ships were horrific, and to escape them, some North Carolinians enlisted with the British in their fight with Spain. North Carolina Governor Alexander Martin negotiated for the release of North Carolinians held by the British, in exchange for some Loyalists. And the last official release from duty for a North Carolina soldier occurred in April 1783.



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### What about the remaining Loyalists?

Remember that civil war aspect of the Revolution? The departure of the opposing armies from North Carolina after the Battle of Guilford Courthouse in September 1781 did not end the fighting. Civil war continued in the backcountry for two more years. Colonel David Fanning, a Loyalist partisan, continued to create major havoc in North Carolina. Using Wilmington as his base, Fanning recruited a Loyalist following and raided farms and towns and captured (and often hanged) supporters of the Revolution. On September 12, 1781, Fanning rode into Hillsborough with 600 men and captured Governor Thomas Burke and other state officials. American General John Butler's militia caught up with Fanning at Lindley's Mill on Cane Creek, southwest of Hillsborough. In a fierce battle Butler failed to free the governor but badly wounded Fanning. Loyalists gained little by Burke's capture and had their hopes dashed by the news of the Yorktown surrender. When the British abandoned Wilmington in November 1781, Loyalist morale collapsed, and a vicious backlash began against them. Many had to flee the state. Fanning eventually left for South Carolina, joining more than 700 other North Carolina Loyalist troops and their families.

The British abandoned Savannah, Georgia, in July and departed Charleston in December 1782, taking with them 5,000 to 7,000 African Americans, many having escaped slavery in North Carolina. Some migrated to Africa or to the West Indies. Others went to Canada, where many of the 3,500 white Loyalists, including many North Carolinians, resettled. The war officially ended on September 24, 1783, but the civil unrest caused by the war in North Carolina continued for years to come.



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### ***Friends in Liberty: North Carolina in the American Revolution***

Watch *Friends in Liberty: North Carolina in the American Revolution* which tells the story of 14-year-old High McDonald and his friend, Anne Taylor, during the Revolutionary War. The film is based on McDonald's actual journal and describes his experiences with the Continental Army.

Watch at: <https://www.ncmuseumofhistory.org/filvodform>



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### ***Friends in Liberty: North Carolina in the American Revolution*** **Activity**

During the American Revolution, one of the few newspapers operating in North Carolina was the *North Carolina Gazette*. Design your own front page for a newspaper from a North Carolina city. Be sure to include a banner with a title, date, and price; one illustration; and three or four articles based on events and people from the year you choose. Select any year between 1775 and 1781.